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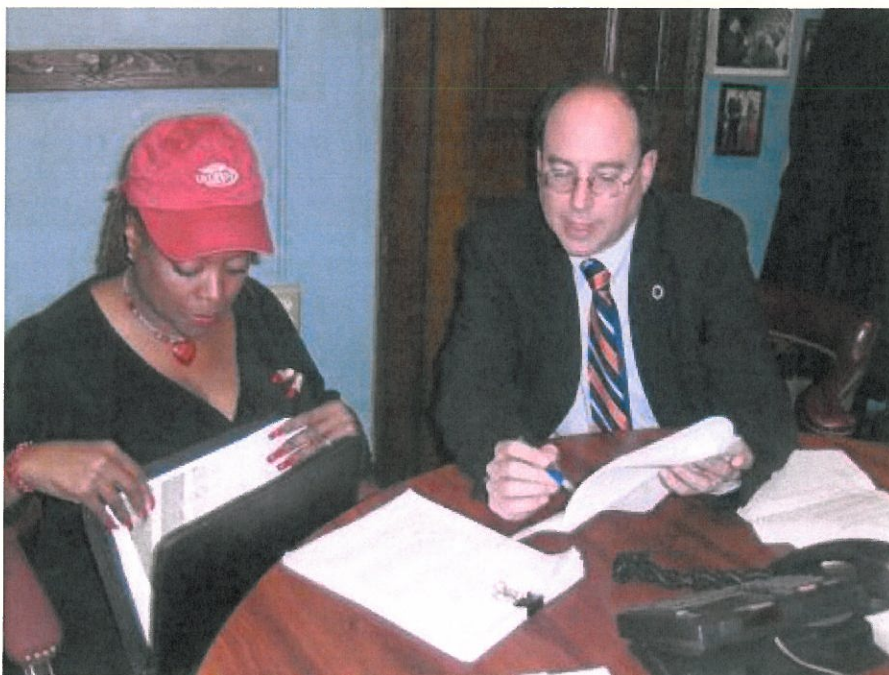
News From Yonkers City Council President Chuck Lesnick

November 1, 2008

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Council Negotiating SFC



Real Estate Co-Chairs Patricia McDow and I continue to work around the clock with [SFC](#), the Administration, consultants, and the full Council to finalize the Findings for adoption by the Council.

We seem to have a "meeting of the minds" on most of the substantive issues and the document is now in the hands of the lawyers who are attending to the details.

SFC reports that their bank gave them an extension until Wednesday without penalties. We plan to adopt the Findings that night since City Hall is closed Tuesday for Election Day and we need to call the meeting 24 hours in advance.

We have incorporated many of the points raised by the Council

and the community into our Findings and wish to thank everyone for their active participation in the environmental review process.

CDA Approves Alexander Street FGEIS



The Yonkers Community Development Agency (CDA) of which I am the Vice-Chair, voted unanimously Thursday night in favor of adopting the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the [Alexander Street Master Plan](#).

Under the proposed master plan, the Alexander Street area would be transformed into a new neighborhood with 18 skyscrapers, from 12 to 30 stories tall, and some low-rise townhouses providing a total of 3,752 new housing units for more than 7,000 new residents (about as populated as all of neighboring Hastings-on-Hudson). In addition, it would include 210,000 square feet of retail shops, such as delis, cafes, restaurants, and 213,500 feet of office space. There would also be a waterfront esplanade and 13 new acres of parkland.

The CDA will have to wait a minimum of 10 days before accepting the Findings. The Urban Renewal and Master Plan will then be referred to the Planning Board and the City Council for approval.

The public's input on the project is greatly appreciated.

For those who wish to see the computer simulated model by the Environmental Simulation Center (ESC), click [here](#).

Parent Report Cards



A report was released this week through the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) disproving the prevailing myth that low-income parents are not interested in their children's academic success. Further, it finds that open door policies at schools encourage more parental involvement.

PTA Second Vice-President Marla Hurban responded to news of the survey by saying, "This validates what the Yonkers Council of PTAs has been advocating forever now. The schools need to get parents more involved and give them the tools they need to do that, especially on a secondary level."

The [report](#), One Dream, Two Realities: Perspectives of Parents on America's High Schools presents findings from a survey of parents of high school students in urban, suburban, and rural communities from diverse backgrounds and income levels.

It says only 15 percent of parents with students at low-performing schools feel that their school does a good job challenging students, compared with 58 percent of parents with students in high-performing schools.

It also found that 47 percent of parents with students in low-performing schools said their schools were doing a good job in encouraging parents to be involved, compared to 85 percent of parents with students in high-performing schools, while 25 percent said their school informed them about academic and disciplinary problems, compared to 53 percent in high-performing schools.

The majority of all parents - 80 percent with students in low-performing schools and 85 percent with students in high-performing schools - said they believe parents should be involved as advocates for their children when it comes to picking courses and teachers.

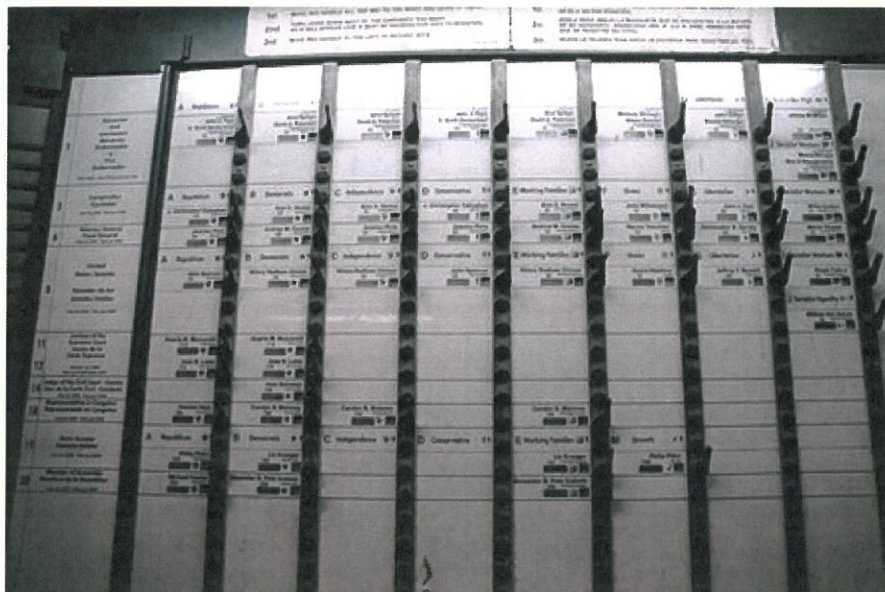
A follow-up to a 2006 study that found lack of parental involvement to be a key factor in kids dropping out of high school, the new report recommends that school officials meet with parents before high school to clarify what constitutes success in school; that schools do more to recruit parent volunteers to serve as liaisons between the school and other parents; and that schools partner with community organizations to offer parent involvement classes.

Yonkers has a student body population of 24,153 attending 39 public schools. About 18 percent of public school students live in poverty (more than twice the county rate as a whole), and 15 percent have limited proficiency in the English language, according to census data.

Photo cap: Principal Michael Angresano stands outside Palisades Preparatory School where his 6th to 9th graders are given a private school approach in a public school setting. The brand new school was created this year through a partnership between the district, and the College Board, with the College Board providing financing from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. Photo courtesy of the New York Times.

Click [here](#) to read the New York Times story about Palisades Prep.

Ballot Propositions



Yonkers voters will decide two relatively minor revisions to the City Charter on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 4.

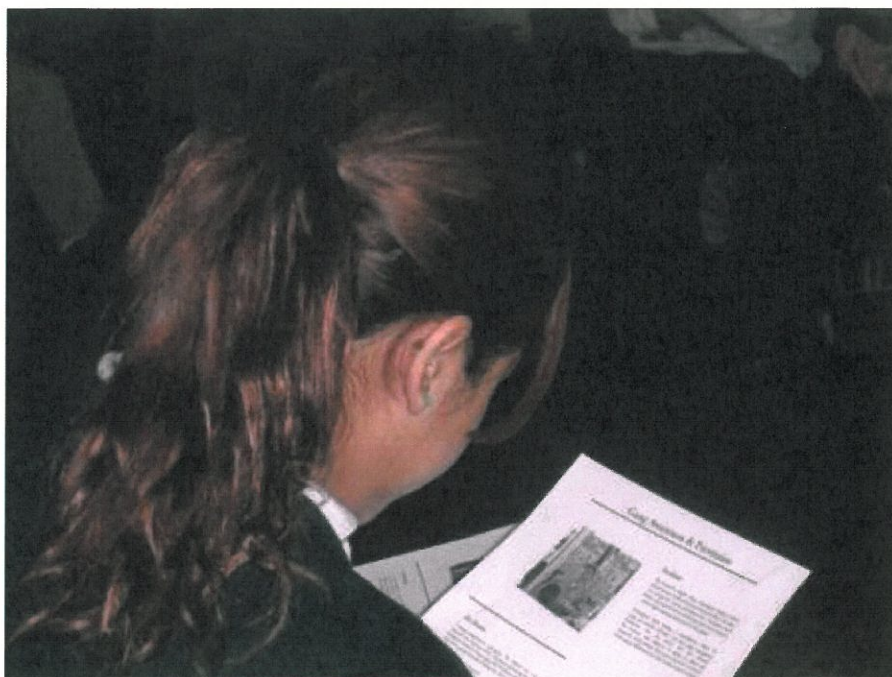
The first proposition is a title change for three deputy fire commissioners making them eligible for overtime. The new titles would be assistant chief of personnel, assistant chief of operations and assistant chief of fire prevention.

The second proposition is described as a housekeeping measure to change job titles to better reflect actual duties and to clean up outdated references.

For instance, the City Charter refers to the finance commissioner as chief fiscal planning officer and describes the commissioner of planning and development as only the commissioner of planning.

Voters are encouraged to click [here](#) to read the entire Charter document before going to their polling places.

Guardian Angels Visit Yonkers



Last Friday, my office along with the [Guardian Angels](#), presented an educational forum to about 500 Sacred Heart Grade/High School students regarding gang violence.

The Guardian Angels are a non profit organization whose members safely patrol crime-ridden areas for criminal activity as well as offer community programming.

The forum taught parents, students and educators everything from how to identify gang members to the warning signs of gang activity and what students can do to prevent gang involvement.

One parent said, "This was a true eye opener and I am glad that I learned about how gangs operate. The more information parents have, the better we can protect our children."

The group will launch a student-based program at Sacred Heart in January. Additionally, they are starting a Yonkers chapter and are in the process of training interested adults to become Guardian Angels.

For more information, please contact the Guardian Angels at 212-860-5575 or Carol Bengis in my office at 914-377-6060.

Yonkers Supports the Disabled



The first local law that I signed as Council President back in 2006 allows disabled residents to apply for rent freezes.

Here, Jon Shenk from [CLUSTER Housing Resource Center](#) signs people up during my office's bi-annual Quality of Life Day which was held at the Riverfront Library on Oct. 25.

The Disability Rent Increase Exemption program (DRIE) is administered by the State Division of Housing & Community Renewal, and is mirrored on the rent freeze program for senior citizens (SCRIE) that Westchester County communities have long provided to hold-down rents for their senior residents.

Yonkers is the first city in Westchester to adopt the DRIE program, so now both seniors and disabled residents can apply to have their rents frozen. DRIE and SCRIE have similar requirements, and Yonkers residents may qualify if:

1. They live in rent controlled or rent regulated apartments;
2. Their total household income is under \$24,000 per year, and;
3. Their rent is at least 1/3 of their income.

Importantly, DRIE/SCRIE is not a "rent rollback" program, but a protective measure against future increases; so DRIE/SCRIE does not reduce a family's rent if it's already more than 1/3 of their income, but it will "stop the bleeding" - save the family from further rent increases. Also, although the program saves tenants money, it does not cost landlords anything, as the program provides owners with property tax abatements equal to the amount of tenants' exempted rent increases.

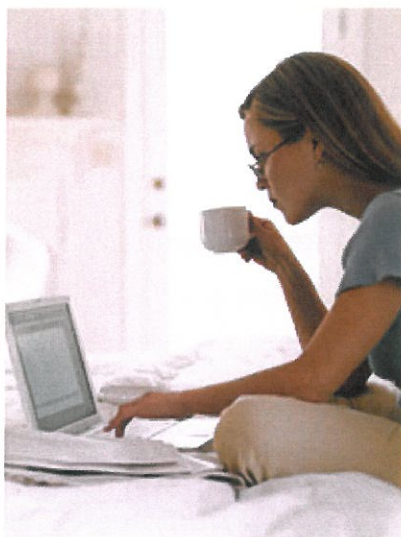
DRIE/SCRIE application forms are available at the offices listed below, and qualifying tenants who are facing rent increases within the next couple months may request help in filling them out. Tenants who want to know more about the program will need to provide the following information when they contact these offices:

1. Their address;
2. Their age and/or the nature of their disability - whether they receive SSI, SSD, Veterans' Disability, etc.;

3. The gross income of everyone in their household, and;
4. The amount of their rent, and the amount & timing of their rent increase

Contact: CLUSTER Housing Resource Center: 914-963-6440, ext# 230, 232 (Spanish speaking).

Survey Says



Got an extra five minutes?

Please click [here](#) to take United Way's annual survey to assess community issues and needs in Westchester and Putnam counties.

They need input from as many residents and workers as possible in order to identify the most critical human care issues in three core areas: education, income and health.

The survey is quick yet it will have long- lasting impact in our county's communities.

Westchester E-Recycling Day



Thanks to the efforts of County Legislator Ken Jenkins and Chairman of the Green Policy Task Force Bob Walters, Yonkers is proud to announce its upcoming e-recycling day, Saturday, Nov. 15 from 9 am -3 pm at the Yonkers Chicken Island Lot at Nepperhan Ave. and New School St.

E-Waste days allow globally responsible residents a place to safely recycle their electronic trash to keep harmful cathode ray tubes, which are found in televisions and computer monitors, and toxic heavy metals and chemicals found in computer equipment from contaminating our land and water resources.

Residents may bring old computer monitors, TVs, stereos, copiers, fax machines as well as

computer towers and other small electric appliances such as phones, toasters, blenders, radios, speakers, and lamps for recycling. If your equipment is still repairable or usable, you might want to consider donating or selling it to someone who can still use it.

Large household appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, freezers, air-conditioners, washers and dryers, and compact fluorescent light bulbs are now being accepted at this event.

Important Reminder: Many electronic products (computers, cell phones, PDAs, etc.) are used to store personal information. Before donating or recycling your equipment, remember to remove all sensitive and personal information from its memory. Note that simply using your keyboard or mouse to delete files does not completely remove the information from your computer's hard drive. Your local software store can provide you with the necessary drive cleaning software appropriate for your system.

For more information, call 211, the Recycling HelpLine.

Beczak Events



MURAL MAKING WORKSHOP

November 8, from 1 - 2:30. FREE to the first 30 to sign up at the Beczak table at Yonkers Family Day, in the atrium of the Riverfront Library on TK date. An adult must accompany children.

The fun begins when "Captain Hudson" leads a parade of children from the library to Beczak's riverfront interpretive center to paint, color and collage a gigantic mural of the Hudson River for display at the Yonkers Riverfront Library.

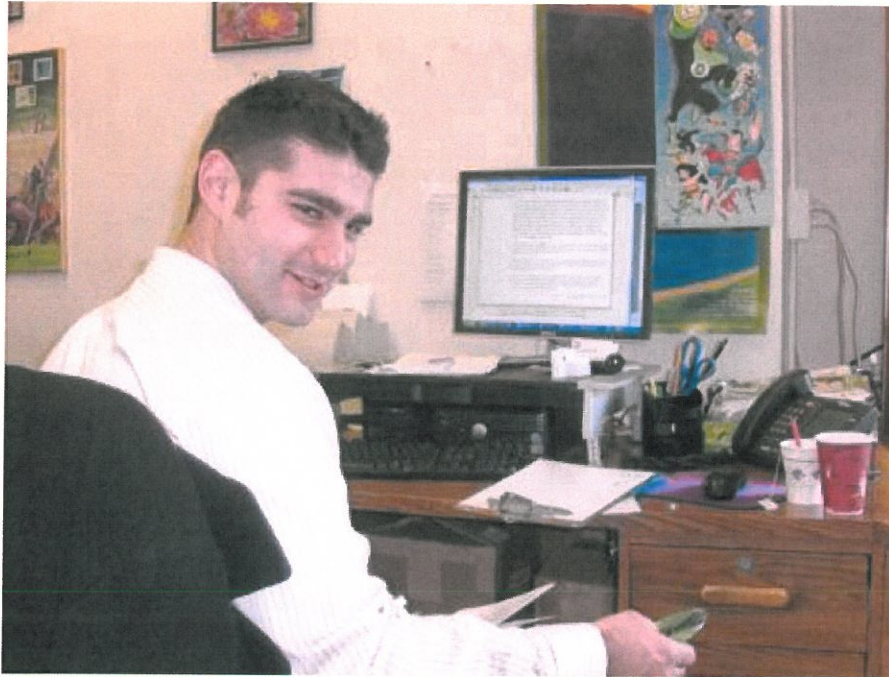
For more information, call (914) 377-1900 x 11, or email SRuff@Beczak.org.

"WHAT'S FOR DINNER" FAMILY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

November 15 from 12:30 - 2 pm. Learn how different birds of the Hudson River Valley catch and eat food using their unique beaks and feet. Try to capture your own dinner acting as your favorite winged friend.

For for ages 5 and up, \$5 per child. To register, call (914) 377-1900 x 13, or email DSukup@Beczak.org.

Welcome Jason



Joining my office this month is our new Green Policy Task Force Coordinator, Jason Rosso.

Jason is a recent graduate from Northeastern University with a BA in Political Science and a minor in Spanish.

He comes to us from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs where he worked as a consultant to the director of communications, gathering public opinion, researching and advising the department on ongoing biomedical lab construction in the Boston area.

"It feels good to be back in New York where I grew up," Jason says. "Yonkers is an up and coming city with a lot of natural beauty. I am excited to be a part of this task force and its efforts to sustain Yonkers."

Holodomor Anniversary



This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Holodomor - the great Ukrainian Genocide of 1932-33.

A white cross procession will take place on November 9 at 1:00 from the parking lot at 301 Palisade Ave. to St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church about 1/2 mile away where a short program will be held. The crosses will form a symbolic cemetery on the field of the church and represent the millions of victims of Holodomor.

Everyone is encouraged to participate. For more information, please St. Michael's at 914-963-0209.

Extra Hour of Sleep

Don't forget: Daylight Savings Time is on Sunday, Nov. 2. This means time to turn your clocks back an hour. And time to check the batteries on your smoke detectors.



Tuesday is Election Day--Please Vote



"Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Alaska any more"

Written by Laura Fahrenthold

email: chuck.lesnick@yonkersny.gov

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